

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A topsheet for an absorbent article which comprises a nonwoven fabric having a plurality of heat fusion joints formed by embossing, the fibers constituting the nonwoven fabric protruding in the thickness direction of the nonwoven fabric between the heat fusion joints to form a plurality of protrusions on both the upper and the lower sides of the nonwoven fabric, and the base of the individual protrusions formed on the lower side projecting laterally in the planar direction of the nonwoven fabric and extending at least partially over an adjacent heat fusion joint.

2. (Original) The topsheet according to claim 1, wherein the nonwoven fabric has an upper layer and a lower layer adjacent to the upper layer, the protrusions formed on the upper side of the nonwoven fabric are made of the upper layer, and the protrusions formed on the lower side of the nonwoven fabric are made of the lower layer, the lower layer contains 50% by weight or more of self-crimping fiber which has been crimped, and the upper layer contains thermally fusible fiber which has substantially no heat shrinkability or does not shrink at or below the self-crimping starting temperature of the self-crimping fiber.

3. (Original) The topsheet according to claim 2, wherein in the protrusions made of the lower layer, the self-crimping fibers which has been crimped are free from each other without being fusion bonded.

4. (Original) The topsheet according to claim 1, wherein the height of the protrusions formed on the upper side of the nonwoven fabric is larger than that of the protrusions formed on the lower side of the nonwoven fabric.

5. (Currently Amended) A fibrous sheet for an absorbent article which comprises a nonwoven fabric having a plurality of heat fusion joints formed by embossing, the fibers constituting the nonwoven fabric protruding in the thickness direction of the nonwoven fabric between the heat fusion joints to form a plurality of protrusions on both the upper and the lower sides of the nonwoven fabric, and the base of the individual protrusions formed on the lower side projecting laterally in the planar direction of the nonwoven fabric and extending at least partially over an adjacent heat fusion joint.

6. (Withdrawn) A process of producing a fibrous sheet for an absorbent article which comprises a nonwoven fabric having a plurality of heat fusion joints formed by embossing, the fibers constituting the nonwoven fabric protruding in the thickness direction of the nonwoven fabric between the heat fusion joints to form a plurality of protrusions on both the upper and the lower sides of the nonwoven fabric, and the base of the individual protrusions on the lower side projecting in the planar direction of the nonwoven fabric, wherein the nonwoven fabric has an upper layer and a lower layer adjacent to the upper layer, the protrusions formed on the upper side of the nonwoven fabric are made of the upper layer, and the protrusions formed on the lower side of the nonwoven fabric are made of the lower layer, the lower layer contains 50% by weight or more of self-crimping fiber which has been crimped, and the upper layer contains thermally

fusible fiber which has substantially no heat shrinkability or does not shrink at or below the self-crimping starting temperature of the self-crimping fiber, which process comprises:

superposing an upper layer-forming material containing the thermally fusible fiber which has substantially no heat shrinkability or does not shrink at or below the self-crimping starting temperature of the self-crimping fiber and a lower layer-forming material containing 50% by weight or more of the self-crimping fiber on each other,

embossing the two materials from the lower layer-forming material side to form a plurality of heat fusion joints by which the two materials are partially joined into a nonwoven fabric and simultaneously to preliminarily crimp part of the self-crimping fiber of the lower layer-forming material that is present around the individual heat fusion joints, and

thermally treating the nonwoven fabric at or above the self-crimping starting temperature of the self-crimping fiber to shrink the lower layer-forming material thereby to make the upper and the lower layer-forming materials protrude in the thickness direction of the nonwoven fabric to form a plurality of protrusions on both sides while making the base of the individual protrusions on the lower side of the nonwoven fabric project in the planar direction of the nonwoven fabric.